

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands

---

### Testimony

---

**HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS  
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK  
GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPOSED VISITOR CENTER  
STATEMENT OF ROBERT A. KINSLEY**

**MANAGING PARTNER, KINSLEY EQUITIES**

**FEBRUARY 11, 1999** Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased that the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands is holding this hearing to discuss the issues related to the proposed visitor center and museum at Gettysburg. I welcome this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss this very important project.

I remember vividly my first visit to Gettysburg on a Seventh Grade trip. Standing in Devil's Den, I experienced the sense of awe familiar to many who have visited that historic place. That experience remains with me today and is one of the reasons I feel so strongly about creating a new visitor center and museum that honors and respects the heritage of Gettysburg.

When I first learned of this project, it was from developers who requested that I either purchase their lands or provide the venture capital necessary to develop their commercial plans. It was my feeling that the proposed sites for these plans were far from the battle action and the borough of Gettysburg, and quite frankly overshadowed by commercial, lodging and conference activity. My belief was that the history of the civil war should not be presented to our children and grandchildren in that context.

I decided to submit my own proposal, and it was selected by the National Park Service. Upon our selection, we then began negotiating with the park service--working together to create a plan for the visitor center that would be a model for privatization of such park projects.

Since we began our work together, there has been an outreach process that has encouraged input from the local community, historians, environmentalists, and from all Americans. The Park Service has conducted numerous public meetings, and the public's input has been an integral part of the evolution of this project.

In an effort to create a dialogue with the Gettysburg community in the past year, I have met with a committee of the Council of the Borough of Gettysburg, the Gettysburg Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Gettysburg - Adams County Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Gettysburg Area Retail Merchants Association. We have also participated in the borough's "working committee," which has led to the formation of a steering committee to develop an interpretive plan for the historic Borough of Gettysburg. We hope to continue working With borough representatives as the museum and visitor center project progresses to ensure that the important history of the borough is told along with the story of the battle.

Last year we established the non-profit Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation to undertake the visitor center and museum project. The goals of the foundation parallel those of the Park Service: to preserve the artifacts and archives, to restore and preserve the cyclorama painting, and to provide an expanded quality interpretive and educational experience for the visitor to Gettysburg.

Of utmost importance will be the restoration of Ziegler's Grove and the Highwater Mark of the Battle, which are situated adjacent to the historic National Cemetery. Archeological and Historic surveys have determined that the proposed site for the Museum and Visitor Center, South of Hunt Avenue between the former Fantasyland Site and Baltimore Pike, saw no significant battle action. The site is located in an area out of the direct view shed of the high water mark of the battle and Culp's Hill, permitting the building to be built in such a way that it does not intrude on the landscape. The building can be situated away from Kinzie's Knoll and the position of Rugg's Battery, which are at the northeastern edge of the site, thereby permitting these historic places to be appropriately interpreted. Also, the site is in an area that can be protected and buffered from commercialism.

The Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation will be funded by grants from foundations, corporate sponsorships, local businesses, and the contributions of individuals. We are confident that we will be able to raise the capital necessary to complete this project.

When the project has been fully funded and the debt retired, the property will be presented to the national park service as a gift to the American people. The Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Project stands before us as a model for success, having received over \$400 million in contributions from the American people.

We are hopeful that the new museum and visitor center will increase overall visitorship to the Gettysburg Area. We believe that the new center and the enhanced interpretive experience will spark the interest of students, seniors, families and all americans. Such improved offerings should bring more visitors to the area and lengthen the duration of their stay.

The Museum Foundation is committed to providing a more complete interpretation of the events that took place in and around gettysburg in july of 1863. A well-planned, coordinated transportation system is integral to that effort. A thoughtful approach to transportation will allow for a meaningful experience for the visitor, as well as increased economic benefits for the Borough of Gettysburg.

We look forward to building a strong and effective partnership among the Foundation, the National Park Service and the Borough Of Gettysburg.

It is expected that a national fundraising campaign will be conducted by the foundation simultaneously with the planning of the project. Construction would commence approximately two years after the definitive agreement with the Park Service is signed, but only after all necessary funds have been pledged or received. All net proceeds realized by the foundation from operations, after payment of debt service and cost of operations will benefit the park service.

I believe that the Gettysburg National Military Park has a talented and committed team. The Park, together with the Foundation and the Borough, can make this project a true success. Gettysburg and its history belong to all Americans.

I thank Chairman Hansen and the Subcommittee for their concern and involvement with this important project.

# # #